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Software to transfer data between security levels

by Francis L. Crumb, Information directorate

ROME, N.Y. — The Air Force Research Laboratory Information directorate awarded a $1,472,000 contract to Secure Computing Corp. of Roseville, Minn., to develop a prototype, demonstrations and software for automatically transferring data between systems and users with different security levels.

"The Department of Defense has a growing need to downgrade and release 'data products' automatically," said Mary L. Denz, program manager in the directorate's Defensive Information Warfare branch.

Secure Computing's research is part of a larger information assurance program sponsored by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency of Arlington, Va.

Secure Computing will develop the technology to apply releasability test mechanisms during the production of data products, such as text files and imagery, rather than after the data products are completed, Denz said. The technology provides greater confidence that a data product is releasable and eliminates the need for human review. This "in-process testing" will also increase the chance of detecting faulty or malicious operations in the data production process.

"We are looking for technologies that will allow the rapid automated downgrade of data products with mixed classification levels," Denz said. "If a command center is operating on a network that can only access secret material, and a decision maker is in need of data that contains some top secret material, this technology will automatically remove the more sensitive aspects of the computer file. An automated boundary controller will allow only that portion of the information through that is covered by the lower security level.

"This rapid downgrade would be a valuable military tool in an environment where human review is not practicable due to operational considerations and time constraints. There could also be commercial applications of the technology in such fields as banking, finance and medical administration." **@**